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Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Eleventh session

New York, 12–14 June 2018

Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 12 June 2018, at 9 a.m.

President: Mr. Panayotov ..... (Bulgaria)
later: Mr. Khiari (Vice-President) ..... (Tunisia)

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(a) General debate

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The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the eleventh session of the Conference of States Parties

1. **The President** declared open the Conference of States Parties and welcomed all participants.

2. *A video to mark the tenth anniversary since the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was shown in which a young woman with disabilities, Ms. Jillian Mercado, interviewed the Secretary-General and the President of the Conference.*

3. **The Secretary-General** said that he was pleased to join the participants at the eleventh session of the Conference of States Parties. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities protected the rights of some 1.5 billion people around the world and was one of the most widely ratified international human rights treaties, with 177 ratifications since its adoption in 2006. The Convention represented a historic commitment which reaffirmed that persons with disabilities were entitled to exactly the same rights as everyone else, and that societies must be organized so that all people, including those with disabilities, could exercise their rights freely.

4. However, signing and ratifying the Convention was not enough. Implementation was essential. Countries must apply the Convention to their development policies, investments and legal systems to ensure that the central pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — to leave no one behind — would be fulfilled. Societies would never achieve the Sustainable Development Goals without the full participation of everyone, including persons with disabilities. The international community could not afford to ignore or marginalize the contributions of 1.5 billion people.

5. Upholding the rights of persons with disabilities was a moral imperative, but not an act of charity. It was a recognition of rights and a practical necessity for building healthy, sustainable societies to the benefit of everyone — those with disabilities and those without. He strongly believed that despite many international agreements and initiatives, Member States, the United Nations system, civil society, the private sector and all stakeholders must do much more to ensure that persons with disabilities had full access to opportunities and could participate fully in society. That was why advancing the rights of persons with disabilities was firmly situated at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, the global blueprint for peaceful, prosperous societies on a healthy planet.

6. From the workplace to public transport systems, from concert halls to cyberspace and daily social interactions, persons with disabilities faced overt discrimination, stereotyping and lack of respect for their basic human rights. There was also a strong gender dimension to disability. Women and girls were disproportionately affected, particularly in the poorest countries in the world. Every minute, more than 30 women were seriously injured or disabled during childbirth. Women and girls with disabilities faced multiple barriers to accessing education, health services and jobs. Without women's empowerment and gender equality, millions of women would continue to suffer from double discrimination based on gender and disability.

7. Everyone must find new approaches and tools for working for, and with, persons with disabilities. Such approaches should include mainstreaming disability in national legislation and development strategies, and engaging and empowering persons with disabilities and the organizations that represented them. Discrimination against persons with disabilities had been going on for centuries, and it would take major efforts to raise awareness, challenge stereotypes and change mindsets. The powerful advocacy of the disability rights movement and the inspiring achievements of women and men with disabilities in all walks of life, from the science laboratory to the sports field, were bringing about lasting change in that regard.

8. It would also be crucial to continue and expand the work that United Nations agencies were doing to support Governments and develop their capacities on issues relating to disability. It was necessary to strengthen policy frameworks and laws on disability at the multilateral and global levels, in line with the Convention and the 2030 Agenda. If persons with disabilities were to be part of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, then institutions, mechanisms and processes must be coherent and coordinated.

9. That was the backdrop of the first flagship report on disability and development, which he would release later in 2018. He was grateful for the contributions towards that report that were being made by many experts from Member States, United Nations agencies, organizations representing persons with disabilities and other stakeholders.

10. At the same time, in order to ensure that the United Nations was leading by example, he had also initiated a comprehensive review of its work in the area of disability. The review would look at all aspects of how the United Nations addressed disability, from

accessibility and employment to mainstreaming disability across all work, particularly development and humanitarian aid. The review would inform a new United Nations action plan and an accountability framework to help the United Nations aim higher and fulfil its promises. He counted on the strong support of Member States and other stakeholders in the efforts to achieve those objectives.

11. The eleventh session of the Conference of States Parties was an opportunity to reflect on gaps and identify concrete steps to implement the Convention in full and in a timely manner. He looked forward to the outcomes of the Conference and counted on continued efforts by, for and with persons with disabilities. By working together, it was possible to remove barriers and raise awareness so that persons with disabilities could play a full part in every sphere of society around the world.

12. **The President** said that the protection and promotion of human rights was one of the three main pillars of the United Nations, a core value enshrined in its Charter and an underlying principle of its work in different areas. The current year marked the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a historic document which had laid the foundations for all international human rights treaties that upheld the rights and dignity of all, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in society. The current session also marked the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention. Its adoption had demonstrated a major shift towards a human rights model of disability which codified the important principles of equality, non-discrimination and respect for human dignity and diversity as they related to persons with disabilities.

13. It was encouraging to see the stable trend towards universal ratification; since the previous session, Ireland, Libya and Monaco had ratified the Convention. The international community had taken significant steps to advance the implementation of the Convention in the years since its adoption. In that regard, he wished to highlight the work towards a United Nations system-wide action plan on disability, initiated by the Secretary-General. It was also encouraging to hear about the efforts undertaken by the President of the General Assembly to improve the accessibility of the General Assembly Hall, a key priority for Bulgaria as the President of the Conference. While such actions were important for mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities throughout the United Nations system, more needed to be done to ensure that persons with disabilities worldwide enjoyed all human rights and were included in society on an equal basis with others.

14. The Conference had grown over the years to become the largest and most important global forum on the rights of persons with disabilities. In close consultation with all stakeholders, the Bureau had decided that the overarching theme of the current session would be "Leaving no one behind through the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities". Under that theme, the Conference would focus on three specific sub-themes: national fiscal space, public-private partnerships and international cooperation for strengthening the implementation of the Convention; women and girls with disabilities; and political participation and equal recognition before the law. The overarching theme and sub-themes reflected some of the most pressing issues for persons with disabilities and addressing them was crucial for delivering on other major global commitments of recent years.

15. The voices of the most vulnerable and marginalized needed to be heard and considered in all decision-making. The 2030 Agenda had recognized persons with disabilities as agents of change in sustainable development, and they should be actively involved in the implementation of the Agenda to ensure that no one was left behind. He looked forward to exploring ways to further strengthen cooperation and partnership among States parties, United Nations entities, civil society and other stakeholders in order to advance the shared mission of implementing the Convention in full, protecting the human rights of persons with disabilities and achieving inclusive development.

16. **Ms. Degener** (Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) said that, as the only female member of the Committee, she sincerely hoped that the current election of Committee members would bring greater gender balance. The voices of women with disabilities were often ignored or silenced, and political participation continued to be dominated by male representatives. Anti-discrimination laws often did not take intersectional discrimination into account. Leaving no one behind in the implementation of the Convention meant, first and foremost, that multiple discrimination against women and girls with disabilities needed to be tackled. Gender mainstreaming and affirmative action measures could be employed to ensure that those women and girls fully enjoyed all their human rights. Furthermore, in order to leave no one behind, the full diversity of persons with disabilities must be taken into account, including indigenous peoples, poor or rural-based persons, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and others.

17. The Committee had held more than 70 dialogues with States parties as it addressed the situation of people being left behind, and had observed that they often were not part of equality measures agreed by States parties, nor were such persons sufficiently recognized in national action plans for the implementation of the Convention. It was therefore necessary to adopt an equality policy based on an inclusive model. Inclusive equality went beyond formal and substantive equality, which had served as the basis of anti-discrimination policy over the last few decades. Accordingly, at its nineteenth session earlier in 2018, the Committee had adopted general comment No. 6 on equality and non-discrimination, which introduced an inclusive equality model based on four dimensions: a fair redistributive dimension to address socioeconomic disadvantages; a recognition dimension to combat stigma, stereotyping, prejudice and violence and to recognize the dignity of human beings and their intersectionality; a participative dimension to reaffirm the social nature of people as members of social groups, and the full recognition of humanity through inclusion in society; and an accommodating dimension to make space for difference as a matter of human dignity. The inclusive equality model would also serve as the basis for the drafting of general comment No. 7 on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention.

18. She was pleased to note the positive relationship between the Committee and the Bureau of the Conference, which set a good example for other treaty bodies and Conferences of States parties in the light of General Assembly resolution 68/268. However, serious cutbacks faced by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights meant that participation by the Chairperson of the Committee and one other Committee expert in future Conferences in New York would be jeopardized. She therefore recommended that the necessary support for their travel should be included in the budget for the twelfth and subsequent sessions of the Conference.

19. **Ms. Devandas Aguilar** (Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities) said that leaving no one behind in the implementation of the Convention required ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by all persons with disabilities. The international community had made progress, but the promise of change brought about by the Convention was not reaching everyone in the same way. The Convention had enabled the rights of persons with disabilities to be incorporated in national and international agendas, but there were still significant challenges in the formulation and implementation of public policies that responded to the demands and needs of those persons. The diverse and complex challenges included: difficulties in the diagnosis and delimitation of problems; several intervention models that needed to be reconsidered; insufficient technical capacity of the operators; a lack of coherence and coordination among sectors and stakeholders; insufficient statistical and administrative information; financing and sustainability challenges; insufficient mechanisms for measuring results; and a lack of mechanisms for ensuring participation and accountability.

20. The United Nations system needed to be strengthened to maximize its impact as a strategic partner of States in realizing the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring their inclusion in all development efforts. The decisions announced by the Secretary-General towards ensuring accessibility and mainstreaming the rights of persons with disability across all United Nations operations were encouraging and demonstrated his leadership and commitment to reforming the Organization to make its human rights and development work more effective and inclusive. She called on all States parties to support that reform process, which would undoubtedly be beneficial for all. The United Nations, States parties, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations had irreplaceable roles to play in making the rights of persons with disabilities a reality. It was important to work together to build inclusive societies that would afford everyone the opportunity to grow, develop and contribute to their communities with dignity, autonomy and independence.

21. **Ms. Cisternas Reyes** (Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility) said that the Convention had revolutionized the field of human rights and had strongly influenced the 2030 Agenda. With the growing number of States parties to the Convention, the sessions of the Conference of States Parties had become increasingly important for fostering dialogue on key issues. One of the sub-themes of the present session was national fiscal space, including the allocation of public resources to disability issues and public-private partnerships. Indeed, the private sector had a key role to play in promoting sustainable development.

22. Another of the sub-themes was the political participation of persons with disabilities. Welcoming the contribution of civil society to the work of the United Nations, she said that over the past decade, organizations of persons with disabilities had become increasingly influential at the national, regional and

international levels. In addition, there were several persons with disabilities holding public office, including the President of Ecuador and the Vice-President of Argentina, which showed that merit did indeed overcome prejudice. She acknowledged the efforts of those who had fought to secure equal recognition before the law for persons with disabilities and called for all political, legal and social systems to comply with that fundamental principle. Pursuant to the *pro persona* principle, persons with disabilities should enjoy full autonomy, including the freedom to make their own choices.

23. She welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to mainstream the human rights of persons with disabilities, including the proposed system-wide policy, action plan, accountability framework, and guidelines on accessibility and the employment of persons with disabilities by the United Nations. The success of such initiatives depended on the involvement of all stakeholders. To ensure that no one was left behind, in line with the overarching theme of the session, education on sustainable development and sustainable living, based on human rights, respect for diversity and gender equality, was essential, as were high-quality data and statistics. She called on national statistical offices and census bureaux to provide relevant data to enable Governments to develop sound public policies.

24. While Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality did not include an explicit reference to persons with disabilities, it was clear that women and girls with disabilities must be empowered to participate in all spheres of life. All stakeholders had a responsibility to ensure the full inclusion of women and girls with disabilities. The recent election of Ms. Ana Pelaez Narváez to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the awarding of the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize, to Ms. Yetnebersh Nigussie were evidence of the growing leadership role being played by women with disabilities.

25. **Mr. Allen** (Chair of the International Disability Alliance) said that actions spoke louder than words, and that article 4.3 of the Convention had been transformed into action through the Conference of States Parties. The Conference was a process that directly affected the lives of persons with disabilities: not only those currently in the meeting room, but also the more than 1 billion people they represented. Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, together with Governments, the United Nations system and civil society, were building a strong and robust platform for progress on the basis of the Convention, the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the forthcoming Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.

26. Working together was already bearing fruit. All stakeholders must hold each other accountable and ensure that legally binding obligations were fulfilled and that the commitment to a society inclusive of all was realized. Furthermore, the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities must be achieved across the United Nations system, disability recognized as a cross-cutting issue, and action pursued until it could be stated with absolute certainty that all rights for all persons with disabilities had been realized.

27. The International Disability Alliance encouraged States to spell out their commitments towards the implementation of the Convention at the forthcoming Global Disability Summit, which represented a critical step towards tangible action for persons with disabilities worldwide. The Alliance welcomed United Nations efforts to establish a system-wide action plan and accountability framework, and was committed to supporting the Organization in consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. The Alliance also urged the United Nations system, and the humanitarian community in particular, to commit to a truly people-centred and inclusive rights-based approach to disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines would be an indispensable component of that work, but stronger commitments were needed from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the International Organization for Migration as well as humanitarian actors and Governments. Now was the time to move together from commitment to action.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda
(CRPD/CSP/2018/1)

28. *The agenda was adopted.*

Agenda item 3: Organization of work

Accreditation and registration of non-governmental organizations

29. The President, drawing attention to the list of non-governmental organizations requesting accreditation to the Conference circulated to States parties by the Secretariat on 25 April 2018, said that he took it that the States parties wished to accede to the requests of 29 non-governmental organizations to participate as observers.

30. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 4: Election of members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD/CSP/2018/CRP.1/Rev.1 and CRPD/CSP/2018/CRP.1/Rev.1/Add.1)

31. The President invited the Conference to elect by secret ballot nine members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to fill the vacancies that would occur on 31 December 2018. He drew attention to the election procedure and other relevant provisions set out in article 34 of the Convention. The curricula vitae of the candidates nominated by States parties whose nominations had been received before the deadline of 12 April 2018 set by the Secretariat had been circulated in document CRPD/CSP/2018/CRP.1/Rev.1. The curriculum vitae of one candidate whose nomination had been received after 12 April 2018 had been circulated in document CRPD/CSP/2018/CRP.1/Rev.1/Add.1. Since the deadline set by the Secretariat served purely administrative purposes and had no legal force, he took it that States parties agreed to accept the nomination received after 12 April 2018.

32. *It was so decided.*

33. *At the invitation of the President, Ms. Hillebrandt (Bahamas), Ms. Balogh (Hungary), Ms. Sola (Germany), Ms. Maitsi (Lesotho) and Ms. Deegan (Palau) acted as tellers.*

34. *A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

Number of ballot papers:	176
Number of valid ballots:	176
Number of representatives voting:	176
Required majority:	89
Number of votes obtained:	
Mr. Ruškus (Lithuania)	111
Mr. Umaru Basharu (Nigeria)	108
Ms. Kayess (Australia)	107
Mr. Schefer (Switzerland)	104
Ms. Kim (Republic of Korea)	99
Ms. Fefoame (Ghana)	92
Ms. Gabrilli (Brazil)	85
Ms. Utami (Indonesia)	85
Mr. You (China)	81
Ms. Gamio Ríos (Mexico)	79
Ms. Ifill (Barbados)	77
Mr. Parra Dussan (Colombia)	70
Ms. Boresly (Kuwait)	69
Ms. Aldana Salguero (Guatemala)	68
Mr. Pyaneandee (Mauritius)	63
Ms. Hagrass (Egypt)	62
Mr. Escalante (El Salvador)	55
Mr. Debattista (Malta)	36
Ms. Gorday de Villalobos (Panama)	23
Ms. Trawkowska (Poland)	23
Ms. Panasyuk (Ukraine)	11
Ms. Vujačić (Montenegro)	9

35. *Having obtained the required majority, Mr. Ruškus (Lithuania), Mr. Umaru Basharu (Nigeria), Ms. Kayess (Australia), Mr. Schefer (Switzerland), Ms. Kim (Republic of Korea) and Ms. Fefoame (Ghana) were elected as members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the period from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.*

Agenda item 5: Matters related to the implementation of the Convention

(a) General debate

36. **Mr. Nenem** (Kiribati) said that national legislation was being brought into line with the Convention, and further strengthened and implemented through a variety of inclusive policies. His Government expected to finalize its review of the national disability policy by the end of the month, and had also explored and subsequently approved a national financial support system, to begin in 2019, for persons whose impairments had permanently and severely hindered their abilities to engage in traditional economic activities for their livelihoods. The data collected in the 2015 national census, incorporating the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability, had been immensely helpful in the development of the national financial support scheme. An employment quota for persons with disabilities would also be considered and finalized by 2019. Such progress was possible through continued cooperation between the Government and its bilateral and multilateral development partners, including the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, the World Health Organization and other international organizations. At the same time, he noted that his Government had limited resources to meet the needs of all Kiribatiens with disabilities as most services were provided for them only on the main island of South Tarawa. Partnerships to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities living on the outer islands would therefore be crucial.

37. **Ms. González de Moreno** (Ecuador) said that the President of Ecuador, Mr. Lenin Moreno Garcés, had established the "Toda una vida" plan, which comprised several subprogrammes aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the Convention. The comprehensive, cross-sectoral plan took a life cycle approach to the protection of the rights of priority groups. The aim was to create a robust social protection floor that would improve their quality of life through the coordinated provision of social services. The Government intended to carry out individual

follow-up to ensure that all those concerned received effective and joined-up social services and could lead a decent life. As with the 2030 Agenda, the plan sought to leave no one behind.

38. The issue of disability was one of the cross-cutting and priority themes of the Government's plan. As persons with disabilities living in poverty had limited access to social services, a follow-up and monitoring system was essential to meet their needs. The "Misión Las Manuelas", one of the subprogrammes of the "Toda una vida" plan, provided comprehensive support to persons with disabilities and their families throughout the country. In line with the principle of "nothing about us without us", the subprogramme took into account the needs and wishes of those concerned.

39. Another of the subprogrammes, "Casas para todos", was intended to provide decent housing for all, with priority for persons with disabilities. The housing estates included parks and community spaces, with a view to fostering entrepreneurship and creating secure, peaceful and inclusive communities. Yet another subprogramme, "Mis Mejores Años", focused on the needs of elderly persons and sought to ensure that those affected by age-related disabilities were not forgotten by the State. The Government was also examining the possibility of training individuals nearing retirement age to be volunteers.

40. All stakeholders had a responsibility to protect human rights. In his capacity as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, the President of Ecuador had promoted the universalization of policies in support of persons with disabilities. The Government was firmly committed to fostering inclusion, solidarity and equality, with a view to creating a culture of peace.

41. **Ms. Duncan** (Canada) said that her Government had engaged with the disability community in Canada to address some of its recommendations on issues related to risk and humanitarian emergencies, legal capacity, intersectionality and women and girls with disabilities. The Government had also had the Convention and its Optional Protocol published in American Sign Language and *Langue des signes Québecoise*, and was working with provincial and territorial partners towards accession to the Optional Protocol. It was committed to developing legislation that would ensure greater accessibility and opportunities for persons with disabilities and expected to announce a decision on the Optional Protocol and the introduction of relevant legislation in the near future.

42. Canada was committed to ensuring inclusive development, as an important part of its feminist international assistance policy, and to delivering humanitarian action that was inclusive of persons with disabilities. In that connection, she commended the Governments of the United Kingdom and Kenya as well as the International Disability Alliance for their leadership in hosting the forthcoming Global Disability Summit.

43. **Mr. Muhammad Bande** (Nigeria) said that his Government had reviewed its national policy on disability in line with current global best practices, and attention was now being focused on persons with disabilities in the context of social welfare incentives. Several Nigerians with disabilities had made great achievements in various areas, including sporting competitions. In terms of capacity-building, persons with disabilities had been further engaged through the provision of economic enhancement tools and materials, including various types of industrial machines and equipment, to increase their incomes.

44. On an annual basis, the Government was procuring and distributing assistive devices and tools such as wheelchairs, tricycles, Braille machines and guide canes to persons with disabilities. International partners such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency had made great contributions towards that effort. Over the last few years, the Government had been implementing a public employment policy guaranteeing 2 per cent of public employment for persons with disabilities. Similarly, corporate organizations in Nigeria had recently been requested to reserve at least 2 per cent of their labour force for persons with disabilities.

45. A national disability bill had been harmonized by the two chambers of the National Assembly and was currently awaiting presidential assent. The bill would improve the welfare of persons with disabilities by further guaranteeing their rights and privileges in public and private policies and programmes. Persons with disabilities would also be encouraged to participate in the forthcoming general elections by voting and running for elected office.

46. **Ms. Sepuloni** (New Zealand) said that persons with disabilities must not be invisible and that high-quality statistics and data disaggregated by disability status were essential for fully realizing their rights. To that end, her Government had included the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability in the 2018 national census.

47. The New Zealand Disability Strategy, along with its supporting plan and framework for measuring progress, envisaged the country as a non-disabling society where persons with disabilities had equal opportunities to achieve their goals and aspirations.

Those mechanisms functioned together to implement the Convention and were governed jointly by organizations of persons with disabilities and government agencies, in line with the Convention.

48. A co-design approach was being used to enable children, young people and adults with disabilities and their families to enjoy more choice and decision-making regarding the support they received. The Government was also pleased to have worked with Mexico and Sweden in introducing the first substantive resolution of the Third Committee concerning the rights of women and girls with disabilities.

49. Although progress had been made through partnerships and stakeholder engagement in the context of the United Nations, there was room for improvement. The Organization should be at the forefront of the implementation of disability-inclusive policies. In that regard, the obligations to provide reasonable accommodation, as set out in the Convention, should be met in order to ensure the full and effective participation of the people who worked for the United Nations.

50. New Zealand welcomed the announcement of the United Nations system-wide action plan, and looked forward to further progress so that no one would be left behind.

51. *Mr. Khiari (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

52. **Mr. Samaniego** (Paraguay) said that he welcomed the fact that several persons with disabilities were holding high political offices. He congratulated the President of Ecuador and the Vice-President of Argentina on their elections.

53. **Ms. Ferreira** (Paraguay) said that in the 10 years since Paraguay had ratified the Convention, through Act No. 3540/2008, a great deal of progress had been made and social attitudes to persons with disabilities were changing. The concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the initial report of Paraguay (CRPD/C/PRY/CO/1) had served as a guide for implementing the Convention. A study had also been carried out to examine what life was like for persons with disabilities in Paraguay. The findings of the study had fed into the National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, developed by the National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

54. Various laws had been enacted, including on accessibility and inclusive education. For example, a percentage of places on university, vocational and teacher training courses were reserved for persons with disabilities and efforts were being made to ensure that 5 per cent of public sector jobs were filled by persons with disabilities, in line with national legislation. To help persons with disabilities to secure employment, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security organized training courses and job fairs, and her Government had designated 20 May as the annual national day for labour market inclusion. To combat poverty, under the national cash transfer programme, families where one member had a disability received additional money.

55. In collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, her Government was conducting a campaign to raise awareness of disability issues. Some 20 trainers with various physical, visual, auditory and psychosocial disabilities held training workshops where various issues were discussed, including how to ensure the full inclusion of persons with disabilities.

56. **Ms. Djaba** (Ghana) said that her Government worked hand in hand with persons with disabilities. For instance, it had made the head of the Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations the Chair of the National Council for Persons with Disability. In addition to reviewing the Persons with Disability Act of 2006, Ghana had domesticated the Convention and had established a technical committee to oversee its implementation. It was implementing the provisions of the Ghana Standard on Accessibility Designs and incorporating them into the building code and transport policy. The State broadcaster had begun airing television programmes in sign language. The Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled would enter into force in Ghana in August 2018.

57. A registration exercise to obtain accurate disaggregated data was under way. According to the 2010 census, there were 737,000 persons with disabilities living in Ghana, of whom 40 per cent were visually impaired, 25 per cent had physical disabilities and 13 per cent had speech impairments. Her Government had established over 60 schools for children with special needs. Universities were striving to become more accessible by providing special assistance for persons with disabilities. Funds had been made available to cover the tuition fees of 50 persons with disabilities. Her Government also provided cash grants to over 156,000 persons with disabilities and had launched an operation to reduce the number of persons with disabilities living on the streets.

58. However, Ghana faced several challenges, including inadequate assistive devices, negative public perceptions of persons with disabilities and a lack of

disaggregated data. To ensure the full implementation of the Convention, her Government would continue to work with all members of society. Mainstreaming disability and ensuring that persons with disabilities were treated as equals was a collective responsibility.

59. **Mr. McGrath** (Ireland) said that in March 2018 Ireland had ratified the Convention, the last European Union member State to do so. The Convention's entry into force one month later had been a milestone for persons with disabilities and Irish society, signalling his Government's commitment to improve the provision of disability services. Furthermore, the National Disability Inclusion Strategy set out over 100 measurable and time-specific actions and took a whole-of-Government approach to improving the lives of persons with disabilities and enabling them to fulfil their potential. In line with the guiding principles of the Convention, in particular respect for the inherent dignity and individual autonomy of persons with disabilities, the Strategy contained a commitment to establish a personalized budgeting task force, with a view to introducing individualized budgets.

60. It was important to focus on a person's abilities, rather than on his or her disabilities, and to ensure that persons with disability had the right to makes decisions for themselves, rather than having decisions made for them. One relevant action was the implementation of a comprehensive employment strategy for persons with disabilities, including an increase of the public service employment target from 3 to 6 per cent, the holding of special public service competitions and the opening of alternative recruitment channels.

61. **Ms. Prentice** (Australia) said that disability issues were a priority for her Government in the context of its international engagement in issues related to development, humanitarian action and human rights. Australia was the Co-Chair of the Global Action on Disability Network, alongside the International Disability Alliance. That unique partnership enhanced international cooperation towards more disability-inclusive development and humanitarian action. Her Government was a leading global advocate for disability data. As accurate data enhanced the visibility of persons with disabilities, she welcomed the decision to make the promotion of high-quality disability statistics and disaggregated data the cross-cutting theme of the eleventh session.

62. The National Disability Strategy 2010–2020, which was the first time that all parts of Government had committed to a unified approach, was intended to bring about a shift in attitudes and promote a more inclusive approach to the design of policies, programmes and infrastructure, so that persons with disabilities could participate in all areas of life. Work had already begun on a national disability framework beyond 2020, including a national disability insurance scheme. Once implemented, the scheme would support over 160,000 Australians with disabilities. A programme established in 2010 to support job seekers with disabilities had helped over 400,000 people to secure jobs. Her Government would seek to further improve the programme, with a view to empowering persons with disabilities and helping them to secure long-term employment.

63. **Mr. Karabay** (Turkey) said that his Government had taken steps over the past decade to ensure that persons with disabilities could participate in society on an equal basis with others. Legal arrangements had been put into place to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market, enable them to continue their education, improve community-based care services, diversify social protection measures and improve accessibility. The country's eleventh development plan, covering the period 2019–2023, incorporated a disability-inclusive approach, in line with the 2030 Agenda. A national strategy paper and a plan of action on the rights of persons with disabilities were also being prepared.

64. Disaggregated data was used to monitor such initiatives. Between 2013 and 2016, Turkey, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, had carried out a project to improve the implementation and monitoring of the Convention. As part of the project, national indicators had been prepared to provide a basis for the data on rights-based monitoring.

65. His Government was committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities were involved in decision-making processes and worked closely with civil society organizations.

66. **Ms. Al-Rammah** (Saudi Arabia) said that article 27 of the Constitution of Saudi Arabia guaranteed the rights of individuals and their families in the event of illness, disability and old age. Having acceded to the Convention and its Optional Protocol, Saudi Arabia had enacted legislation that protected the rights of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, her Government was currently developing a national strategy, programme and register for persons with disabilities and harmonizing its statistics and data.

67. Persons with disabilities accounted for 7 per cent of the population of Saudi Arabia and 48 per cent of the labour force had accessibility problems. The Government's National Transformation Programme

2020 was intended to integrate persons with disabilities into the labour market and help them to secure employment. To ensure that such persons could be active members of society, early education and intervention programmes for children with disabilities had been established and students were given assistance so that they could complete their education. Numerous support centres for persons with disabilities had been established and the King Salman Award for Disability Research had been set up to promote research into disability issues. All such initiatives were overseen by a dedicated State body.

68. **Ms. Radišauskienė** (Lithuania) said that her country had ratified the Convention in 2010 and was making every effort to ensure its full implementation so that persons with disabilities could fully participate in public life and be self-sufficient. All individuals should be able to lead independent lives within close-knit communities. One of her Government's top priorities was to identify and help those who were excluded from society.

69. Her Government had introduced several policies to provide effective support to persons with disabilities and their families. For instance, immediately after the birth of a child with disabilities, the parents were offered comprehensive support; additional health care and social services were available for persons with disabilities; and her Government was working to improve access to education and adapted housing, and to increase the number of jobs open to persons with disabilities.

70. **Ms. Dimitrova** (Bulgaria) said that Bulgarian legislation provided legal guarantees of non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all. The National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities 2016–2020 took into account the principles of the Convention, the recommendations of the Council of Europe and European Union legislation. Aligning national legislation with the provisions of the Convention was a continuous process. Persons with disabilities participated in every stage of the legislative process. Indeed, representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities and representatives of civil society sat on the National Council for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities.

71. Her Government was constantly upgrading relevant laws to strengthen the implementation of the Convention. For example, it intended to enact a law on the integration of persons with disabilities; it was drafting a law on social services that would establish an innovative model of financing and enhance the quality, effectiveness, management and monitoring of social services; and it was preparing new legislation pursuant to article 21 of the Convention on freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information, including a provision for the introduction of Bulgarian sign language.

72. As President of the current session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention, Bulgaria had actively involved persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all aspects of the preparations. Governments must work with and learn from organizations of persons with disabilities in order to fully implement the Convention. It was also important to ensure the effective participation of persons with disabilities in all development efforts. Strengthening the implementation of the Convention and creating the necessary conditions for the enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities were crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda and leaving no one behind.

73. **Mr. Bandpey** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his Government had long been committed to supporting persons with disabilities. In 1980, 16 different agencies had been merged to form the State Welfare Organization, which provided rehabilitation, prevention and protection services to over 1.4 million people and ensured that the essential needs of persons with disabilities were met. Its work was supported by over 7,000 non-governmental organizations.

74. The State Welfare Organization sought to prevent disability through screening, timely intervention and early diagnosis. In addition, the Organization had set up an emergency telephone line to allow people to report violence against persons with disabilities; it worked to boost employment opportunities for persons with disabilities by providing occupational support and vocational training, contributing to their monthly salaries and reserving 3 per cent of public sector jobs for persons with disabilities; it aimed to improve social participation and strengthen the role of non-governmental organizations; it had established a dedicated secretariat to promote the implementation of accessibility measures; and it was working with counterparts in other Member States to improve service delivery and share educational and operational experiences.

75. A mechanism had been created to follow-up the implementation of the Convention. In March 2018, the law on the rights of persons with disabilities had been amended to remove operational barriers and bring it closer to the provisions of the Convention, with a human rights-based approach. A committee composed of organizations of persons with disabilities and other

relevant stakeholders would monitor the implementation of the amended legislation.

76. **Mr. Muniz** (Brazil) said that his country had made significant efforts to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities and incorporate into domestic law the obligations set forth in the Convention. It was cognizant of the remaining challenges and determined to overcome them. The candidacy of Ms. Mara Gabrilli for membership of the Committee reflected the progress made in that regard. The Convention was now deemed to be an integral part of the Constitution and had the force of a constitutional text. Brazil had made particular progress in implementing public policies and adopting laws and regulations consistent with the Convention. The Brazilian Inclusivity Act had been amended in 2015 to include practical actions to implement the Convention, particularly with regard to accessibility. Guidelines on accessibility for engineering works and services had also been formulated. A regulation on telecommunications accessibility had been published, and two presidential decrees had very recently been adopted to provide for accessibility in small enterprises and entertainment venues respectively. Some 2,000 professionals had been trained in Brazilian Sign Language, and quotas were in place for persons with disabilities at public federal universities. The Government was working with civil society organizations to foster inclusivity in the job market, provide professional training and rehabilitation, and ensure access to braces, prostheses and other health care. The National Council on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a broad-based organization that brought together public and civil society entities, had played a prominent role in those areas.

77. **Ms. Kospiri** (Albania) said that, since its ratification of the Convention, Albania had made good progress in terms of strengthening respect for the rights of persons with disabilities. In 2016, a national action plan for persons with disabilities had been approved. The plan, which had been prepared in consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities, was intended to promote inclusion, prevent discrimination and eliminate barriers to accessing public services. The implementation of the plan would be monitored by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

78. The Convention had been domesticated through a framework law on inclusion and accessibility. A law on social housing for persons with disabilities had also been enacted. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection was reforming the disability assessment system, in line with World Health Organization guidelines and standards. A multidisciplinary disability assessment commission was being established; its work would be based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health.

79. In addition, efforts were being made to strengthen cooperation with civil society organizations and improve the collection of statistical data at the local level. The number of teaching assistants in schools for children with disabilities had doubled, and more persons with disabilities were in employment. Lastly, her Government had simplified the procedures and documents required to access public services.

80. **Ms. Manombe-Ncube** (Namibia) said that her country's fifth national development plan, which was aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, comprised four strategic pillars: economic progression; social transformation; environmental sustainability; and good governance. The plan was intended to ensure that, by 2023, persons with disabilities had access to high-quality, integrated social protection. Legislation, policies and programmes to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities were in the pipeline. The University of Namibia had recently established a dedicated office to address the needs of students with disabilities. The Government had also introduced a bursary for students with disabilities.

81. National stakeholder workshops on disability issues had revealed that many government entities experienced severe bottlenecks in implementing legislation in sectors such as health, education and development. Disability-inclusive development strategies required a multisectoral approach, in which the role of every stakeholder was explained, appreciated and acknowledged. Other findings were that parents of children with disabilities often believed that there was no point in sending them to school and that many persons with disabilities had limited access to justice owing to communication barriers, a situation little was being done to address. The workshops had opened the Government's eyes to the fact that awareness-raising and advocacy work was a continuous and lifelong process, and had improved its engagement with the legal profession, local and regional governments, traditional authorities and grass-roots communities.

82. Namibia continued to strive for the inclusion of all and was increasingly being recognized regionally and internationally for its efforts. For instance, a Namibian non-governmental organization had recently been awarded the Bari-Bari prize for outstanding albinism advocacy. In addition, Namibia had received recognition from the Africa Disability Alliance and been nominated to act as a mentor to other African countries and champion the development of policy and legal

frameworks under the African Union Disability Architecture.

84. **Ms. Arellano** (Observer for the International Disability Alliance) said that the International Disability Alliance was a network of eight global and six regional organizations of persons with disabilities and their families, representing over 1,100 national organizations in more than 180 countries.

85. The International Disability Alliance had been instrumental in the drafting and negotiation process of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and had advocated for the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities across the United Nations system. The Alliance had been instrumental in the establishment of the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and in the creation of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; in the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the 2030 Agenda and its follow-up mechanism; and in the establishment and co-chairing role of the Global Action on Disability Network. It would co-host the first ever Global Disability Summit in July 2018, together with the Governments of the United Kingdom and Kenya.

83. The Alliance wished to recognize the current Bureau of the Conference of States Parties for its leadership in the planning and development of the sessions in 2017 and 2018. It welcomed the fact that the priorities of organizations of persons with disabilities had been embedded into the fabric of the Conference. However, the Alliance was gravely concerned that meaningful consultations with the organizations under its umbrella at the country and community levels were becoming less frequent, and that fewer fiscal resources were being allocated for the implementation of the Convention. For all groups of persons with disabilities to be effectively included in all areas of development and humanitarian action, a greater financial commitment would be required at all levels.

86. The Alliance was also concerned that the United Nations system continued to be reluctant to produce concrete recommendations on the disaggregation of data by disability in the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The lack of such disaggregated data would increase the risk that persons with disabilities would not be counted and therefore systematically excluded from policies and programming.

87. The Alliance therefore called on the United Nations system and Member States to establish a system-wide strategic policy, action plan and accountability framework and to create a unit dedicated to the inclusion of persons with disabilities within the United Nations system; to include persons with disabilities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, particularly women and children, through active consultation and engagement with their representative organizations at the national and subnational levels; to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all humanitarian and security policy frameworks, strategic plans and programmes; to collect and disaggregate data through the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability; and to increase investment in disability-inclusive development, ensuring adequate support to persons with disabilities, particularly underrepresented groups, and their representative organizations, so that those persons could develop the skills and capacities that would enable them to engage in and contribute to society in a meaningful way.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.